
Editorial

Response Validity and Construct Integrity in Personality Assessment

Volume 16 of *Individual Differences Research* (part of The Back Volumes Project) focuses on construct and measurement integrity on personality scales. The assessment of personality has long been defined by its double-edged nature: it captures enduring traits through self-report, yet remains vulnerable to the subtle, and sometimes not so subtle, influences of self-presentation, defensiveness, and social desirability. The three articles gathered in this volume, two reprints and one new empirical contribution, revisit this tension from distinct but convergent perspectives. Each study examines how individuals' response styles, motivational biases, and interpretive tendencies shape the psychometric properties of personality instruments.

Response Bias and Personality Structure

The volume opens with Bernard and Walsh's (2004/2018) examination of socially desirable and non-purposeful responding on the NEO PI-R and the Personality Research Form (PRF). This study investigates how embedded validity checks function across measures and how response bias relates to reports of trait expression. The finding that NEO PI-R validity items were largely uncorrelated with an established measure of response validity underscores a persistent psychometric challenge: socially desirable responding may represent meaningful personality variance rather than statistical error (Ones et al., 1996).

Moreover, the positive association between Desirability and Conscientiousness offers evidence for a nuanced relationship between impression management and genuine self-regulation. This resonates with conceptualizations of social desirability as a blend of adaptive self-control and socially normative self-presentation (Paulhus, 2002; Uziel, 2010). Rather than dismissing such variance Bernard and Walsh's (2004/2018) findings might encourage researchers to view response bias as a legitimate facet of trait expression: a theme that continues throughout this volume.

Reassessing Construct Reliability: The Hunter Cynicism Scale (HCS)

The next contribution (Lee et al., 2010/2018) provides a concise but informative demonstration of psychometric calibration in an attitude-based construct - cynicism. With reliability coefficients in the .80s and stable item correlations, the HCS established sound internal consistency for a measure of interpersonal mistrust and skepticism.

Conceptually, the HCS might operate as a counterpoint to defensiveness measures, tapping a worldview characterized by guardedness rather than impression management. The article's inclusion in this volume broadens the scope of response validity research, posing a thought-provoking extrapolation of how both exaggerated virtue and defensive cynicism might shape self-report accuracy. The study's attention to basic psychometric transparency and intricacies of factorial structure echoes more recent concerns about construct clarity and measurement reproducibility (Clark & Watson, 2019; Flake & Fried, 2020).

Convergence of Conceptually Similar Validity Scales

The volume concludes with Daughtry and Stephens' (2018) report on validity scales of the Ausburg Multidimensional Personality Instrument (AMPI). This new empirical contribution bridges legacy methodology and contemporary measurement design. The AMPI, conceived as a brief nonclinical analogue to the MMPI-2, was developed to provide researchers with an efficient, psychometrically sound tool which and as a possible classroom lab tool for teaching personality assessment to novice students. In this study, the AMPI's validity scales—Virtuousness, Unlikeliness, and Guardedness—were examined in relation to their MMPI-2 counterparts (L, F, and K).

Results revealed significant cross-scale correlations and regression-based confirmation of expected relationships, suggesting that the AMPI validity scales effectively capture the response tendencies embedded within the MMPI-2. The findings align with calls for concise, theoretically grounded measures that retain interpretive fidelity while minimizing respondent burden (Ben-Porath & Tellegen, 2008; Sellbom & Tellegen, 2019).

By closing the volume, this contribution underscores the enduring relevance of response validity research. It demonstrates how the conceptual logic of traditional validity scales can be adapted for modern, nonclinical instruments—extending the psychometric lineage represented by the preceding reprints.

A Shared Psychometric Imperative

Viewed together, the three studies articulate a coherent psychometric message: validity is not a fixed attribute of tests but an ongoing interpretive process (American Educational Research Association et al., 2014). Each article highlights that self-report data reflect both personality and self-presentation, and that understanding this interplay is essential for meaningful interpretation.

From socially desirable responding to cynical defensiveness, and finally to structured validation of scales, this volume charts a continuum of inquiry that reaffirms the central task of personality assessment—to measure individual differences with both precision and psychological insight.

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